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ABSTRACT

Presented in this document are 5 papers concerning nontraditional grading systems and their acceptance. Nontraditional grading practices such as the pass/fail or pass/no credit systems are being used in some fashion in many American colleges and universities today. However, most of these institutions limit considerably the amount of credit that may be earned on such a system, and very few will allow 50% or more credit to be earned on this basis. Employers in private industry appear to be less concerned with the type of system a student was graded on than his previous work experience record, and government employers base their hiring on government-designed tests rather than grades. Acceptance to medical or law school is, however, highly determined by previous scholastic records, and professional schools of this sort do not seem to be very receptive to records with nontraditional grading symbols. Students on these grading systems are, for the most part, enthusiastic. They feel that absence of the traditional grading system relieves pressures about grades, gives freedom to explore new areas, facilitates close student-faculty relationships, and reduces competition with fellow students. (HS)

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AACRAO Committe on Institutional Studies and Operational Analysis

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Concerning Non-traditional Grading Patterns
Robert L. Bailey

Users Perceptions of Non-traditional Grading Patterns: undergraduate and graduate institutions and the extensive use of highly non-traditional grading patterns -- pass/fail or credit/no record
Robert Hauwiller

Experiences of Employers, Representing both Government and private enterprise, concerning acceptance of non-traditional grading patterns
Robert Elman

Opportunities for Admission to Medical and Law Schools on the basis of a non-traditional undergraduate evaluation
Tom Beckham

A Student's Perception of the Non-traditional Grading pattern
William Saunders

Tables Reflecting the Results of Questionnaires Used to gather data concerning non-traditional grading patterns. These tables were prepared by Robert Hauwiller for this publication.

CONCERNING NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING PATTERNS

The primary purpose of this report is to inaugurate your consideration of the effect that various non-traditional grading schemes have for student employment by government and private enterprise and on student admissions to graduate and professional schools.

The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers early in 1971 conducted a nationwide survey of grading policies at member institutions. This survey was generated by reported changes in grading policies at a number of institutions and by the widespread discussion which these changes stimulated. The purposes of the survey were to determine (1) the nature and extent of changes from the traditional grading system, (2) practices in accepting transfer students and credits from institutions with non-traditional grading systems (3) the rate and recency of change in grading system, and (4) the anticipated nature of grading systems in the near future.

For the most part, the changes reported were in the direction of departures from the traditional grading system, creating a number of issues related to admission of transfer students, acceptance of terminated students by private enterprise, government and professional and/or graduate institutions, and more basically, the philosophy of grading and its effect on the educational process.

Several other activities have also identified the problems related to non-traditional grading systems. Two of these activities, The Credit by Examination Workshop co-sponsored by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and the publication of Report 9, College Grading Practices: an overview by ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education have both raised the need for further research and experience related to the unintended consequences of non-traditional grading practices, both for society at large and within the educational process.

Already it has become very apparent in our limited experiences at Governors State University, that if the minority and middle to low-income students, which are greatly attracted to the non-traditional grading patterns, are to be dealt with effectively and fairly, additional information and professional assistance for the user must be generated.

An additional study by Dr. David Adamany, while Dean of the College in 1969-70 at Wesleyan University, polled various graduate and professional schools attened by Wesleyan graduates pertaining to their students acceptability. He reported that while there was a variation in responses, the overall pattern of responses showed overwhelming preference for grades.

The experiences, gained from these educational efforts, and reflected in this report demonstrate the need for faculty and students to consider what consequences for employment and graduate and professional institution admission result from

non-traditional grading patterns. It would seem that for those institutions with non-traditional grading patterns, a significant allocation of resources must be committed for further extensive professional assistance to the user if instructional institutions are to move forward courageously and capably in providing meaningful student academic evaluative information for other agencies, such as government, private enterprise, graduate and/or professional schools.

Any University commitment to a non-traditional grading system that allows a university to better achieve the mandate of teaching students, must include the additional obligation to provide the many public and private institutions with assistance in accepting the emerging non-traditional grading patterns. Consultative services and educational information for university and community groups along with special institutes and seminars must be provided for the user. Since the impact of this movement is national and since there are hundreds of communities and institutions now facing the prospect of considering students from non-traditional grading systems, the opportunity for service in this movement is obvious. These public and private institutions are badly in need of competent professional assistance as they approach the problems with traditional acceptance of non-traditional grading patterns. This assistance is not presently available to these institutions and communities.

Admissions and Records personnel, personnel directors and employers must have access to continuing aid. The establishing of this expertise in the professional staff of an admissions and records office could constitute formidable assistance in moving forward with this effort. The objective of these competent professional personnel would be that of making available to educators, industrial leaders and user groups information to assist them in dealing more effectively with instructional evaluations associated with efforts to implement non-traditional grading patterns and to, in general, create an improved human relations climate in higher education, government and private enterprise so that actual equality of educational and employment opportunity will result.

USER PERCEPTIONS OF NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING PATTERNS GRADUATE AND/OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS AND THE EXTENSIVE USE OF HIGHLY NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING PATTERNS - PASS/FAIL OR CREDIT/NO RECORD

Introductory Remarks

Criticism of the various processes used to evaluate students either relative to their attainment of a degree or entrance into a degree program is not new. The increased emphasis on the experimentation, implementation and interpretation of non-traditional processes of evaluation is something new. The reasons for this new emphasis can be many, including the reoccuring focus upon the attainment of knowledge and skills rather than the traditional, competitive grades and also related to the times we live in wherein higher education is re-evaluating itself and its systems.

The fact of this new emphasis is well-documented in The AACRAO Survey of Grading Policies in Member Institutions in which over eighty-one percent of the respondents indicated changes in their grading systems during the past six years, and forty-one percent indicated that their future grading systems would tend to become less traditional.

The same survey reported that eighty-six percent of the institutions allow the students to use the pass/fail (or credit/no record) option for less than one quarter of the credits applicable toward a bachelor's degree. Ninety-four percent of the institutions limited the credit to less than fifty percent of the degree program. It would seem that although there is a new emphasis on non-traditional grading systems, the results of the survey tend to support the perceptions of most admissions officers that only a small minority of

the student population is involved in any extensive use of the highly non-traditional grading systems.

An attempt has been made using student and institutional inputs to further investigate the student and institutional impressions of the extensive use of pass/fail or credit/no record systems of evaluation.

Although philosophical questions regarding evaluative systems are at times considered inappropriate for discussion by registrars and admissions officers, some brief remarks seem proper at this time to give perspective to the general problem of evaluation.

It appears that the problem facing an admissions officer when confronted with a transcript in which fifty to a hundred percent of the credit has no traditional grades assigned is similar to the problem of evaluating work experience or CLEP examinations: the lack of a device or criterion by which one can make a judgment that will relate the new system (the credit, the experience, or the examination) to the system now in use. The question becomes: can equivalencies be established? If not, when should one of the systems be rejected or should there be two or more systems enjoying a mutual coexistence? Clearly, the traditional system of grading has been of value in serving as a foundation for predicting success in future academic ventures. Functionally, the traditional grading system provides the evaluater with a brief synopsis of student achievement using the title of courses to indicate general areas of academic exposure and using grades to rank the students within and across all areas. Grades give no precise indication of knowledge or skill attained, but gathered together to calculate the statistical mean, can serve as an effective inferential measure.

The problem has been that traditional grades do not do all the things the user desires; it is claimed that some negative effects can be experienced by students who feel overly pressured and that no grades of any form be given; rather that the knowledge and skills attained should be emphasized; as a result of this logic a small number of institutions have supported the concept by using detailed faculty comments (rather than grades) to list in detail the achievements and capabilities of the students. If the comments can be equated to traditional grades, the prediction or ranking value has not been lost but brevity has been lost. If the comments cannot be equated to traditional grades, the prediction or ranking value apparently has been lost.

Serious questions are raised about using replacements for the traditional grades in order to make predictions or to rank; standardized tests may place an applicant to a graduate and/or professional school at a disadvantage; letters of recommendation may not be as precise as required or even be assumed to be unreliable.

Assuming that most graduate and/or professional schools wish to serve those who would most benefit from their programs, and that those who would most benefit would be those who are most qualified, a type of ranking would necessarily be applied to all applicants.

If this philosophy would change or some new evaluative device, maybe more complex to analyze but more precise in measuring, would become the standard system of evaluation, more students would

experience the new emphasis on knowledge and skills to be attained, rather than the old emphasis on competing with their peers or "working for a grade".

Motivation of the Survey

This study was initiated for at least two reasons:

1. To obtain the perceptions of institutions that have received transcripts which were reflective of extensive use of highly non-traditional grading systems and which were related to real evaluation situations.
2. To provide input to the staff at Governors State University as to the probable treatment that would be given to its students when they make application and submit highly non-traditional transcripts to another institution for admission purposes.

Method of Survey

Eleven institutions were identified as having highly non-traditional grading systems. They were contacted by mail, requesting that they themselves complete and return a questionnaire (See Questionnaire I) and also send a list of names and addresses of 50 of their 1971 graduates.

Four of the institutions provided such lists; a fifth sent a list of names of graduates and institutions to which the transcripts were sent. The other replies are noted on Table I. Using the lists of the four institutions mentioned above, the graduates were contacted and also surveyed (See Questionnaire I under the Study of Student Perceptions). The graduates were

asked to respond indicating institutions to which they had transcripts sent. From the fifty-four responses and the list provided by the fifth institution indicated above, it was noted that almost all the institutions to which transcripts were sent were graduate or professional schools.

Finally, these institutions were surveyed (See Questionnaire II). On the questionnaire, the graduate and the institution from which the student graduated were identified and questions were raised regarding the transcript of that graduate as well as a general impression of non-traditional grading systems.

Findings of the Survey

A. Institutions Using Non-Traditional Grading Systems

Of the eleven institutions surveyed, four had what could be considered highly non-traditional grading systems; this is, almost all academic work was recorded in a pass/fail or credit/no record mode, at times accompanied by detailed faculty comments. These institutions are coded 1, 3, 6 and 8 in Table I. From the data provided, it is noted that there were a considerable number of undergraduates who have experienced problems in transfering, and that there were a noteworthy number of inquiries per year requesting some clarification of the grading system. In point, the survey further substantiates what was noted in the introductory remarks, that there are few institutions that are using extensively highly non-traditional grading systems. Those that do are receiving feedback from students and from other institutions

which indicates that there are interpretative problems. And some of these problems are not just interpretative; students' chances for admission are considerably decreased as is also indicated in a recent survey[1] by Schoemer, Thomas and Bragonier of Colorado State University. This survey shows that if twenty-six to fifty percent of the grades on a transcript are non-traditional, chances of admission are considerably decreased in over seventy-two percent of the schools surveyed; if more than fifty percent of the grades are non-traditional, that survey noted that the chances considerably decreased in over eighty-seven percent of the schools surveyed.

B. Institutions Receiving Transcripts from Institutions with Non-Traditional Grading Systems

Using Tables IA and II relating to institution replies regarding processing of transcripts, there is a considerable difference between the results in Tables IA and II when comparing replies relating to transcripts from all institutions surveyed as opposed to replies relating to transcripts from institutions which were identified as using extensively, highly non-traditional grading systems. Over forty-six percent of the replies indicated that transcripts from all institutions surveyed were processed differently:

[1]A detailed publication of the results of this survey will appear in College and University this spring.

approximately sixty-two percent of the replies that were commenting on transcripts which were from institutions which extensively used highly non-traditional grading systems, indicated that the transcripts were processed differently.

The tables also reflect that if the transcripts were processed differently, approximately as many applicants were given less consideration as were not given less consideration. Over fifty-three percent of the replies dealing with transcripts from institutions extensively using highly non-traditional grading systems indicated a general unfavorable impression of the non-traditional grading systems, while forty-six percent of the fifty-four replies dealing with all institutions surveyed indicated the same unfavorable impression.

The impressions of the students whose transcripts were being evaluated were extremely favorable. Note the Table and comments in the section on Student Perceptions.

_____

Institution

QUESTIONNAIRE I

1. Approximately how long have you had your current non-traditional grading system? _____

2. Approximately how many total students have used this system? _____

3. Approximately how many students graduate from your institution each year? _____

4. Briefly indicate how your grading system differs from the traditional system (transcript explanation form can be inserted in lieu of a written explanation).

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Please comment on the acceptability of your students' transcripts from the standpoints of:

   a) Approximate number of students having difficulties with transfer of courses with non-traditional grades _____

   b) Level (with or without a degree, A.A., B.A., M.A., etc.) of students having difficulties with transfer of courses with non-traditional grades.

   _____

   c) Number of inquiries per year directed to your institution for a further clarification or interpretation of your non-traditional grading system (in order to facilitate an admissions decision at another institution.) _____

6. Please attach a copy of a student permanent record illustrating your non-traditional grading system.

Please Reply To:

Robert P. Hauwiller, Registrar
Office of Admissions and Records
GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY
Park Forest South, Illinois 60466

QUESTIONNAIRE II

OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS and RECORDS GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY

Name of Institution or Agency _____

_____
City State Zip Code

_____

has indicated that he(she) had a transcript of academic work completed at _____ forwarded to you.

In the transcript, a non-traditional grading system was used.

1) Did the record of the individual indicated above have to be processed differently than one on which was recorded only traditional grades? _____

If yes, did this cause any less consideration of the request for admission, certification or employment. _____
(If yes, explain briefly _____

_____

2) Were some or all of the credits which were recorded in a non-traditional manner not accepted for admission or certification because they were so recorded? _____

If the credits were not accepted, what additional information would be required so that they would be accepted? _____
_____

3) Briefly indicate your impression of non-traditional grading systems.

_____FAVORABLE. Explain briefly _____

_____UNFAVORABLE. Explain briefly _____

_____

_____

_____INDIFFERENT _____

_____

INSTITUTIONS USING HIGHLY NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING SYSTEMS

TABLE I

Institutions Contacted-Code Number	No. Years System Used	Approximate No. Students Using the System	Approximate No. Graduates Per Year	No. of Students with Transfer of Course Problems	Level of Students with Problems	No. of Inquiries Per Year Regarding Clarification
1*	4	3,000	300	few	--	25
2***	12	3,600	255	0	0	40
3**	34	3,500	175	1/3	Undergrad	70-80
4***	10	4,000	250	few	--	5-10
5*	4	30,000	150	0	0	1
6*	8	1,100	70	15-20%	Undergrad & Grad	
7*	10	--	300	0	--	--
8	7	--	500	--	--	--
9	6	400	300	1-2	Undergrad	1

11 Institutions Contacted
- 4* Provided lists of names and addresses of graduates
- 2*** Provided names of institutions to which many of their graduates have transcripts sent
- 1** Provided names of students along with institutions to which transcripts had been sent
- 2 Replied to the questionnaire only
- 1 Did not reply
- 1 No longer exists

TABLE IA

INSTITUTIONAL REPLIES
REGARDING PROCESSING OF
TRANSCRIPTS OF STUDENTS WHO
GRADUATED FROM INSTITUTIONS WITH
NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING SYSTEMS

Number of Inquiries: 74
Number of Replies: 54

U.S. Institution by Geographic Location	Transcript Processed Differently			If Processed Differently Request for Admission Given Less Consideration			Impression of Non-Traditional Grading Systems		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response	Favorable	Unfavorable	Indifferent or Other
Northeast and East	8	13	0	1	2	5	3	5	9
Southeast	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0
Midwest and Upper Midwest	11	6	1	5	4	2	1	10	6
South	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
Northwest	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0
West and Southwest	2	3	0	1	1	0	1	2	2
TOTAL	25	26	3	9	9	7	7	23	21

INSTITUTIONAL REPLIES REGARDING PROCESSING OF
TRANSCRIPTS OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED FROM INSTITUTIONS
WITH EXTENSIVE USE OF HIGHLY NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING SYSTEMS

TABLE II

U. S. Institution by Geographic Location	Transcript Processed Differently			If Processed Differently Request for Admission Given Less Consideration			Impression of Non-Traditional Grading Systems		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response	Favorable	Unfavorable	Indifferent or Other
Northeast and East	8	9	0	1	2	5	2	5	7
Southeast	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0
Midwest and Upper Midwest	9	2	0	5	3	1	1	8	2
South	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northwest	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0
West and Southwest	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	22	13	0	8	8	6	5	17	10

A BUSINESSMAN'S PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS GRADUATES OF NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING SYSTEM INSTITUTIONS

During the past decade an increasing number of universities have accepted modified forms of non-traditional (e.g., pass-fail or credit-no credit) grading systems for measuring student performance. Yet, the degree to which the concept of non-traditional grading is understood and accepted by the non-academic segments of our society (public, government and industry) is uncertain.

Recognizing that a primary purpose of a university education is to prepare the individual for a career in his chosen field of endeavor, it is vitally important to determine the famiiliarity with, and acceptance of, non-traditional grading systems among prospective employers. Our study, therefore, focused upon the two primary employers of college graduates in the United States:

Private Enterprise

Government

Methodology

In order to determine the attitudes and hiring practices of prospective employers towards graduates of non-traditional grading institutions, a survey was conducted among one-hundred and twenty-five government agencies and industrial organizations in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. The organizations surveyed ranged in size from an industrial company with less than fifty employees to a large government agency with more than one-hundred thousand employee applicants per annum. Although the results of the survey cannot be validated or projected on a statistical basis, due to the size of the sample, the conclusions drawn from the survey

questionnaires, I believe, based upon personal experience, reflect the prevailing views of industrial and government officials.[1] A copy of the survey questionnaire is shown as Exhibit A.

Attitudes of Industrial Organizations

Employment Criteria

Prospective industrial employers rate the previous work experience of an applicant as the most important criteria in selecting employees. TABLE 1 summarizes respondents rating of various employment criteria.

TABLE 1

Employment Criteria Rated in Order of Importance

1. Previous work experience
2. Undergraduate or graduate grades
3. Quality and reputation of Institution
4. Academic and personal references
5. Narrative description of education objectives
6. GRE or other test scores

The response of the survey group appears to be consistent with the generally held business view that an individual's previous track record is the best indicator of his future preformance.

Degree Verification

The preponderance of industrial employers, as shown in TABLE 2, do not require that a prospective employer verify degree completion or previous college attendance.

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[1]Mr. Elman was previously associated with IBM, ITT and the Singer Company and is currently Vice President of DESA Insutries and President of its Power Products Division, located in Park Forest, Illinois.

TABLE 2

Requirement for Prospective Employee
to Verify Degree Completion

YES - 30%
NO - 70%
TOTAL 100%

In the limited number of instances, where degree verification is required, an official college transcript is generally used for documentation purposes.

Employer Attitudes Toward Non-Traditional Grading System Graduates

Prospective employers would definitely consider for employment, based on receipt of a transcript, a graduate of a non-traditional grading institution. As shown in TABLE 3, ninety percent of the companies responded favorably to the concept.

TABLE 3

"Would Student from Non-Traditional Grading
Institution be Considered for Employment"

YES - 90%
NO - 10%
TOTAL 100%

However, more than half of the respondents indicated that additional data would be required from the student.

TABLE 4

"Would Additional Date be
Required from the Student"

YES - 55%
NO - 45%
TOTAL 100%

The types of additional data required by prospective employers, includes:

Academic Instructor or Advisor references

Personal references

Personnel Test scores

Despite the apparent receptivity of industry to graduates of non-traditional grading institutions, when asked, "In your consideration would such a student find it more difficult to secure employment than a student with comparable skill who has his work recorded using a traditional grading system," fifty-five percent of the industrial respondents indicated it would be more difficult for a non-traditional grading system graduate to secure employment. (See TABLE 5)

TABLE 5
"Would a Non-Traditional Grading System Graduate Find it More Difficult to Secure Employment"

YES	55%
NO	45%
TOTAL	100%

In addition, industrial respondents indicted the same attitudes as expressed in TABLES 3, 4, and 5, toward the receipt of a transcript from and applicant who had attended an institution wherein approximately half of the student's work was recorded using a non-traditional grading system.

Attitudes of Government Agencies

The attitude of government agency officials towards the hiring of graduates of non-traditional grading system institutions appears to be similar to those expressed by corporate officers. There were, however, several areas of disparity in the attitudes of government and indistry officials.

Employment Criteria

Government officials are required to operate with the framework of the Civil Service System. Therefore, in selecting candidates for employment, agency personnel are bound by, and heavily influenced by, Federal Service Entrance Examination test scores. The hiring process was described, as follows, by Department of

Labor personnel: "Before a person may be considered for federal employment, they must take, and pass, the Federal Service Entrance Examination. Normally, when an agency has a vacancy at the entry level for college graduates (GS-5 or GS-7), they request the U.S. Civil Service Commission to send them a list of eligibles whose qualifications are suitable for the position to be filled. The candidates are referred in order, by score and veteran's preference. Our selection must be made from the top three (3) available eligibles. To be considered available, an eligible must respond to a written inquiry within a specified period of time, and indicate that he is interested in the postion and able to start work within a reasonable period. Those who respond are normally contacted further by telephone or in person before a selection is made.

You can see from above the main factor we use in selection is the test score. Therefore, your ungraded system would not radically affect our choice".

In addition, government personnel mentioned previous work experience; undergraduate grades and course material; and interviews as important criteria in selecting employees.

Degree Verification

In seventy percent of the cases, government agencies require verification of the degree. Frequently, both a diploma and an official transcript are required as documentation.

Government Agency Attitudes Toward Non-Traditional Grading System Graduates

Government agency personnel indicated the same attitude as industry officials toward hiring graduates of non-traditional grading system graduates with one major exception: as previously mentioned, government agencies are guided and restricted by Federal Service Entrance Examination Test Scores.

Conclusions

The results of the survey as well as my personal business experience, leads me to the following summary conclusions:

(1) Business has not fully accepted the innovative concept of non-traditional grading.

(2) Prior business experience remains the principal criteria in the hiring of applicants by industrial firms. Undergraduate grades and the reputation of the university are important in the hiring of undergraduates directly from the university.

(3) Government agencies rely chiefly upon Civil Service examinations in the hiring of personnel. Where examinations or test scores are not the sole criteria used in the selection process, previous experience and undergraduate grades are important criteria in selecting employees.

(4) Non-traditional grading institutions must develop an improved communications program to familiarize business executives and government officials with the grading techniques and curriculum employed at their universities. Generally, I believe the techniques of these institutions are not well known or fully accepted in the business community. Personnel executives, familiar with traditional grades, transcripts and curricula are likely to focus their recruiting efforts at traditional institutions unless the benefits to be derived

by a student from attending a non-traditional grading university are clearly understood. Moreover, the recruiter will have to be provided with a means of determining the relative class standing and potential of prospective employment candidates in order to satisfy industry's continuing quest for the top-rated students.

(5) Extensive, in-depth research into prevailing executive attitudes is essential. I suggest the following areas as deserving of further research:

Attitude of executives in large (Fortune 500) companies compared to executives in medium and small size business.

Attitudes of executives in different sectors of industry:

Utilities
Retailing
Manufacturing
Service (Advertising, Banking, Investment Banking, etc.)

Attitude of executives in different geographic areas--is there a regional bias?

Attitude of executives familiar with non-traditional grading systems compared to executives unfamiliar with non-traditional grading systems.

Compilation of this data will be of invaluable assistance to graduates of non-traditional institutions during the job placement process.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADMISSION TO MEDICAL AND LAW SCHOOLS ON THE BASIS OF A NON-TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE EVALUATION

Students should be encouraged to explore various academic subjects without fear of seriously damaging their opportunities for acceptance into a professional school.

"Students would feel free to explore unknown areas and to try courses in which they feel some insecurity."

"A pass-fail grading system shifts the students' efforts from grade-getting to learning."

"Teachers have a greater opportunity for increased interaction with students once the grade barrier has been removed." (Warren, 1971).

Comments similar to these have been read by each of us. The faculty at a university is often an enthusiastic advocate of non-traditional methods of evaluating students. This is especially true of professional schools; however, professional school admission policies do not reflect a similar enthusiasm for acceptance of non-traditional grading patterns from undergraduate institutions.

In a recent survey completed by Governors State University, ninety-three percent of the medical and dental schools responding to the questionnaire stated that they accepted applications for admission from applicants who had earned approximately fifty percent of their undergraduate credit in a non-traditional grading environment. Eighty-five percent of the seventy-one professional schools responding to the survey consider applications from students who earned approximately all of their credit in an institution with a non-traditional grading system.

Law School admissions policies were slightly more restrictive. Approximately eighty percent of the sixty law schools responding to the Governors' State questionnaire stated they would consider an application from a candidate who earned approximately fifty percent of his college credit on a pass-fail basis. Of the sixty law schools responding to the questionnaire, sixty percent stated that they would consider applications from candidates who earned all of their undergraduate credit on a pass-fail basis.

After a superficial review of the data, one might conclude that professional schools are more receptive than ever before to applications for professional education from candidates who have participated in a non-traditional grading experience during their undergraduate education, but this basically is not true. Ninety-two percent of the medical and dental colleges that would accept an application based on a non-traditional grading system indicate that the candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage if he submitted an application on the basis of a non-traditional grading system. Approximately eighty-six percent of the law schools supported a similar position.

Admissions committees basically have little or no experience in evaluating students who have earned a substantial percentage of their college credits from a non-traditional system. The survey results indicate that most admission committees find it difficult to evaluate such a student's transcript as compared to a student who has demonstrated his academic achievement in major courses in a university using a traditional grading system. The absence of grades would force the admissions officers to give greater weight to

standardized tests such as the medical college admissions test, the dental aptitude test, and the law school admissions test. In addition to these problems, admissions committees with experience in evaluating non-traditional transcripts express concern with the system due to the amount of time required to satisfactorily evaluate a transcript.

Many of the professional schools stated that a non-traditional method of evaluation at the undergraduate level was a "cop-out" on student evaluation by the faculty. They stated that the faculty had an obligation to encourage high levels of student achievement and there is very little, if any, evidence to support the concept that a non-traditional method of evaluation is as successful as the traditional method of evaluation for accomplishing this. Graduates of most institutions using a non-traditional grading method are at a distinct disadvantage when compared with graduates of institutions using traditional grading methods in their attempts to earn admission to professional schools. The results of the survey indicate that this condition is likely to continue as long as there are more qualified candidates for admission than the number of positions available in each school.

In summation, admission committees for most of the professional schools seem to support a concept similar to the one endorsed by the Association of American Law Schools as reported in their "Statement on Pass-Fail Undergraduate Grades of the Law School Admission Test Council." They report that, "validity studies conducted over the years demonstrate that the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) scores makes a significant contribution toward prediction of an applicant's grades in law school and thus aids in the making

of the admissions decisions. These validity studies show that the L.S.A.T. score and the undergraduate grade point average are the two best quantitative predictors; and that when they are used together they are better than either used separately". (Association of American Law Schools)

Most Admissions committees will consider students who graduate from institutions using non-traditional grading methods; however, they feel greatly handicapped in their decision-making process and must base their consideration strictly on the basis of standardized test scores and recommendations. It is an advantage to the student to be able to submit grades to an admissions committee that will provide them with an opportunity to evaluate not only his competence, but also his consistency in academic achievement.

A STUDENT'S PERCEPTION OF THE NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING PATTERN

Being a student of a school with a non-traditional grading system--a pass or no-credit version--my paper will lend itself to the student's views or observations.

A questionnaire was forwarded to 223 graduates of four schools which had used, to some extent, a non-graded system. Response to the questionnaire was approximately twenty-four percent, roughly half male and half female replied. One hundred percent of the respondents of three of the schools had taken instruction of some sort under a non-graded system. Of those graduates who had studied under a non-graded system ninety-two percent had favorable impressions, seven percent unfavorable, and one percent of the students had mixed emotions.

The favorable comments were:

A. Relieves pressures of grade point average

B. Freedom to explore unfamiliar disciplines without risk of penalty

C. Closer student-faculty relationship

D. Instructor evaluations are more meaningful than grades--"A", "B", "C", etc.

E. Allows one to fulfill individual needs rather than compete with other students

F. A bachelor degree is for education not necessarily for job training and the non-graded system encourages one to expand his areas of understanding.

These five comments by no means encompass all of the

favorable aspects of the non-graded system; and yes, some of these overlap in areas. But looking more deeply into the comments, we can definitely see what the graduates are saying. Reflect on your own experiences:

A. How many students have you seen cram before an exam to get a good grade but still don't understand the material.

B. How many times did you not take a course you wanted because you were not sure how well you might do.

C. How many students have you given a "B" or "C" and later found that the student had a better grasp of the subject than the student you gave an "A".

D. How many times have you seen your mistakes on an exam and yet not realized where your weakness lay.

E. How many courses have you taken not to increase your knowledge but because they were an easy "A".

F. What does a BA or BS show other than the ability to complete a task. These graduates will be retrained by their employers.

The unfavorable comments were few but still important:

A. Written evaluations tended to be more descriptive than evaluative.

B. Grades are needed for entrance into graduate school and employment.

These two unfavorable comments are chiefly due to the newness of the system. As for the written evaluations, some instructors will always do a better job with these than others.

As for the second comment, I feel we all, administrators, educators and products of the system must sell the system to the users. Everyone resists change but if the non-graded system is the best method of instilling knowledge in students, then let us undertake the task of devising a method of evaluating the graduates of the non-graded system.

To come a little closer to the arena in which I have dealt, the same questionnaire was sent to 18 students at Governors State University, but the favorable comments focused strictly on the reporting of transcripts of the credits and unfavorable as well as indifferent comments dealt basically with the acceptance of the transcripts by employers or other schools.

I would like to describe a little more completely the workings at Governors State University. As stated previously, my school is a non-graded pass or non-credit system; but above and beyond this, it is also a non-structured concept. A student not only has the freedom of taking modules without risk of penalty, he may also progress with the objectives at his own pace. Please note that I used the word module, not course, for students in the same module may be attempting to achieve a different number of objectives based on agreement between the coordinator and the student which is designed to permit the student to concentrate in the area of his choice while allowing the coordinator to set the basic competencies which a student is expected to accomplish in order to receive credit for the module.

Personally, I feel that the system is fantastic. No two people grasp subject matter at the same rate and with this system, if one has difficulty with a particular concept he has time to spend until he understands it without being forced to skip it and do the best he can from there on.

We all are faced at times with various crises which may demand our time for days or weeks and such crises have caused numerous "dropouts." With this system, one can take such crises in stride without having to be prepared on a given day for a given test.

As many of the responding graduates pointed out, the non-graded system permits one to take courses without risk of penalty, and these students are not required to "drop out" to "find themselves" but can possibly more easily and more profitably for themselves and for society find their niche within the system, and by so doing may clear the way for numerous others.

Usually one attends college so that at a future date he will be better prepared to support himself and his family--at least this is my reason. With this in mind, I became concerned with the actual acceptance by employers of the educational system which I was attending. Much to my dismay I must report an extremely negative feedback.

First I spoke with my present employer. I am an Area Manager--more simply a sales engineer. The basic approach here was merely to ascertain my supervisor's opinion of an ungraded school system.

His feelings were simply that there had to be some way to differentiate between those who know the subject thoroughly and those who have barely gotten under the wire.

True, I will admit that this would be a fabulous bit of information to have, but does an "A", "B", or "C" grade tell us this. Could it be that the "A", "B", or "C" grade tells us only which fraternity has the best test file?

The grades, even with a good test file, may tell us who at that time knew more of the subject asked of the class. Is it important just to know a subject verbatum? I say no one must be able to apply the facts to solve problems faced in his area of concentration, and most of our educational systems today fail to concentrate on usage.

Here I must give great respect for the courses I have taken at Governors State for the courses are more solution oriented rather than rote learning concept. The purpose of an education to me is to be able to locate the proper sources of information and how to apply the information once obtained to solve the problems at hand which may be utterly different than anything seen in a textbook.

My next approach was to inquire of personnel offices of some companies as to their attitude toward non-graded backgrounds. The answers here were not real firm. For example, let me cover my query of Vicker's Division of Sperry Rand with whom I recently applied for a position--the replies here were very typical.

Personnel at Vicker's informed me that they would prefer to see grades and that if two applicants had equal qualifications but one was from a non-graded school and the other from a graded school with "B" or above, that the "graded school" applicant would be offered the job.

Governors State does not give a standard transcript with course title and hours but instead, lists objectives completed to obtain a competency. True, this does give a more complete picture of the applicant's background but as it was pointed out at Vicker's, personnel would seldom request a transcript, and if they did the time alloted for reviewing the transcript would be very limited. The applicant with standard transcript would usually be given preference.

Personally, I find that since I am not applying for my first job but rather am looking for a change in jobs most companies are not concerned with my grades or the school which I attended but rather what I am making, what my job responsibilities are and what has been my performance in the past.

I have had no experience applying to graduate or professional school from the non-graded system, but I feel there will be some resistance but as for medical school I know they rely heavily on entrance exam scores so the obstacle should not be as great in this area.

Yes, students from a non-graded system will meet certain prejudices, but what is new. As far as personnel people are

concerned is an "A" from Furman University as good as a "B" from Harvard or is an "A" from Webster College as good as a "B" from IIT. Ha! is right. Why? Because of the records. One commonly moves from the known to the unknown and graduates of certain schools have proven to be better prepared.

This is the area of emphasis for today--acceptance. The administrators must organize the system so as to enable the educational process to reach its summit, the educators must insure that the products which they turn out are superior and the students must prove that they have recieved an education which enables them to better cope with the problems of the world. By each faction doing its best society will be sold on the system, thus minimizing the unfavorable aspects of the system.

INSTITUTIONS USING HIGHLY NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING SYSTEMS

TABLE I

Institutions Contacted-Code Number	No. Years System Used	Approximate No. Students Using the System	Approximate No. Graduates Per Year	No. of Students with Transfer of Course Problems	Level of Students with Problems	No. of Inquiries Per Year Regarding Clarification
1*	4	3,000	300	few	--	25
2***	12	3,600	255	0	0	40
3**	34	3,500	175	1/3	Undergrad	70-80
4***	10	4,000	250	few	--	5-10
5*	4	30,000	150	0	0	1
6*	8	1,100	70	15-20%	Undergrad & Grad.	25-50
7*	10	---	300	0	--	--
8	7	--	500	--	--	--
9	6	400	300	1-2	Undergrad	1

11 Institutions Contacted
4* Provided lists of names and addresses of graduates
2*** Provided names of institutions to which many of their graduates have transcripts sent
1** Provided names of students along with institutions to which transcripts had been sent
2 replied to the questionnaire only
1 Did not reply
1 No longer exists

REPLIES OF A SAMPLE OF GRADUATES OF INSTITUTIONS
WHICH USE NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING SYSTEMS

Institution	Graduates Contacted	No. of Replies			Earned Credit Under Non-Traditional System		Overall Impression			Institutions Contacted to Which Graduates Had Transcripts Sent	Concern Expressed About Traditional Grading System
		Female	Male	Total	Yes	No	Favorable	Unfavorable	Mixed		
I.	50	8	5	13	13	0	11	2	0	21	2
II.	94	6	9	15	5	9	4	1	0	5	1
III.	29	6	7	13	13	0	13	0	0	27	5
IV.	50	6	7	13	11	0	11	0	1	21	3
TOTAL	223	26	28	54	42	9	39	3	1	74	11

INSTITUTIONAL REPLIES REGARDING PROCESSING OF TRANSCRIPTS OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED FROM INSTITUTIONS WITH NON-TRADITIONAL GRADING SYSTEMS

Number of Inquiries: 74
Number of Replies: 54

U.S. Institution by Geographic Location	Transcript Processed Differently			If Processed Differently Request for Admission Given Less Consideration			Impression of Non-Traditional Grading Systems		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response	Favorable	Unfavorable	Indifferent or other
Northeast and East	8	13	0	1	2	5	3	5	9
Southeast	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0
Midwest and Upper Midwest	11	6	1	5	4	2	1	10	6
South	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
Northwest	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0
West and Southwest	2	3	0	1	1	0	1	2	2
TOTAL	25	26	3	9	9	7	7	23	19

SCHOOLS OF LAW

Number of Schools Contacted - 144
Number of Replies - 62

TABLE I

Response to
Student Applications with Transcripts Wherein
Approximately All of the Work Was Recorded
Using Non-Traditional Grading Systems:
Such As Pass-Fail, or Credit-No Record

Size & Type of School	Would Be Considered For Admission		Additional Data Required
	Yes	No	
Public Less Than 500	12	3	9
Public More Than 500	9	3	8
Private Less Than 500	9	6	0
Private More Than 500	13	7	12
	43	19	37

TABLE II

Response to
Student Applications with Transcripts Wherein
Approximately Half of the Work Was Recorded
Using Non-Traditional Grading Systems:
Such As Pass Fail, or Credit-No Record

Size & Type of School	Would Be Considered For Admission		Additional Data Required
	Yes	No	
Public Less Than 500	14	1	9
Public More Than 500	9	1	8
Private Less Than 500	11	3	10
Private More Than 500	16	5	13
	50	10	40

SCHOOLS OF LAW

TABLE III

Type of Additional Information
Required for Consideration of an Application

Type & Size of Institution	Grades	Test	Letters of Recommendation	Other
Public Less Than 500	1	4	5	4
Public More Than 500	2	4	5	0
Private Less Than 500	6	5	6	0
Private More Than 500	3	9	6	2
	12	22	22	6

SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE

Number of Schools Contacted - 149
Number of Replies - 71

TABLE I

Response to
Student Applications with Transcripts Wherein
Approximately All Work Was Recorded
Using Non-Traditional Grading Systems:
Such as Pass-Fail, or Credit-No Record

Size & Type of School	Would Be Considered For Admission		Additional Data Required
	Yes	No	
Public Less Than 500	18	2	18
Public More Than 500	19	6	16
Private Less Than 500	14	3	12
Private More Than 500	9	0	9
	60	11	55

SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE

TABLE II

Response to
Student Applications with Transcripts Wherein
Approximately Half of the Work Was Recorded
Using Non-Traditional Grading Systems:
Such as Pass-Fail, or Credit-No Record

Size & Type of School	Would Be considered For Admission		Additional Data Required
	Yes	No	
Public Less Than 500	18	3	17
Public More Than 500	22	2	18
Private Less Than 500	17	0	12
Private More Than 500	9	0	9
	66	5	56

SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE

TABLE III

Type of Additional Information
Required for Consideration of an Application

Type & Size of Institution	Grades	Test	Letters of Recommendation	Other
Public Less Than 500	4	5	11	2
Public More Than 500	8	5	7	3
Private Less Than 500	4	3	9	1
Private More Than 500	4	1	1	3
	20	14	28	9

SCHOOLS OF LAW AND MEDICINE

TABLE I

Responses Indicating a Student Would Experience More Difficulty Securing Admission If Half or All Work Was Recorded Using a Non-Traditional Grading System Such As: Pass-Fail or Credit-No Record

School Has Indicated That:	Schools of Law		Schools of Medicine	
	Student with Record-All Non-Traditional Grades	Student with Record-Half Non-Traditional Grades	Student with Record-All Non-Traditional Grades	Student with Record-Half Non-Traditional Grades
Student Would Be Considered for Admission with All or Half of the Record Being Non-Traditional	33	32	47	40
Student Would Be Considered for Admission with Half of the Record Being Non-Traditional, But Not All Being Non-Traditional	10	10	6	6
Student Would Not Be Considered for Admission with All or Half of the Record Being Non-Traditional	10	10	5	5
TOTAL	53	52	58	51

Number of Schools of Law: 62 Number of Schools of Medicine: 71

GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

TABLE I

RANKING OF CRITERIA FOR EMPLOYMENT

Type of Employer	Work Force	No. of Respondents	Instructor or Adviser Recommendations Ave. Rank (#)	Reputation of Institution Ave. Rank (#)	Narrative Description of Educ. Objectives Ave. Rank (#)	Grades Ave. Rank (#)	Tests Ave. Rank (#)	Previous Work Exp. Ave. Rank (#)	Other* Ave. Rank (#)
I. Government Agency	Less Than 50	1	-	-	-	4 (1)	-	3 (1)	1 (1)
	50-100	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Over 100	6	4 (4)	5.5 (4)	4.5 (4)	2.4(5)	4.5(4)	3.2(6)	1.8(5)
	Sub Tot.	8	4 (4)	5.5 (4)	4.5 (4)	2.7(6)	4.5(4)	2.7(7)	1.7(6)
II. Private Enterprise	Less Than 50	3	2 (1)	1 (1)	-	2.5(2)	3 (1)	1.8(4)	1.5(2)
	50-100	3	3.7 (3)	4 (4)	3.5 (4)	3 (4)	6.5(2)	1.8(4)	1 (1)
	Over 100	5	5 (1)	2.5 (2)	2 (1)	4 (1)	-	2 (2)	1 (1)
	Sub Tot.	11	3.6 (5)	3.1 (7)	3.3 (5)	3 (7)	5.3(3)	1.8(10)	1.3(4)
	Grand Total	19	3.8 (9)	4.0 (11)	3.8 (9)	2.8(13)	4.9(7)	2.2(17)	1.5(1

* Such as: Interviews, Personal References, etc.

GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

TABLE II

VERIFICATION OF DEGREE

Type and Size		Need to Verify Degree		Proof of Degree		
		Yes	No	Diploma	Transcript	Other
Government Agency	Less Than 50	-	1	-	-	-
	50-100	-	1	-	-	-
	Over 100	5	1	2	3	1
	Sub Total	5	3	2	3	1
Private Enterprise	Less Than 50	1	2	-	1	-
	50-100	1	2	-	1	-
	Over 100	3	2	1	1	-
	Sub Total	5	6	1	3	-
	Grand Total	10	9	3	6	1

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GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

TABLE III

Applicants for Employment - Academic Record: All Non-Traditional Grades Such as: Pass/Fail or Credit/No Record

Type and Size		Would Be Considered for Employment		Additional Data Required to Make Decision	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Government Agency	Less Than 50	1	0	1	0
	50-100	1	0	0	1
	Over 100	4	2	3	1
	Sub Total	6	2	4	2
Private Enterprise	Less Than 50	3	0	0	2
	50-100	3	0	3	0
	Over 100	4	1	2	1
	Sub Total	10	1	5	3
	Grand Total	16	3	9	5

GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

TABLE IV

Applicants for Employment - Academic Records: Half Non-Traditional Grades Such As: Pass/Fail or Credit/No Record

Type and Size		Would Be Considered for Employment		Additional Data Required to Make Decision	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Government Agency	Less Than 50	1	0	0	1
	50-100	1	0	1	0
	Over 100	6	0	4	2
	Sub Total	8	0	5	3
Private Enterprise	Less Than 50	3	0	0	2
	50-100	2	0	2	0
	Over 100	4	1	3	1
	Sub Total	9	1	5	3
	Grand Total	17	1	10	6

GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

TABLE V

Type of Additional Information Required

Type and Size		Grades	Tests	Letters of Recommendation	Other
Government Agency	Less Than 50	0	0	1	0
	50-100	0	0	0	1
	Over 100	0	2	0	1
	Sub Total	0	2	1	2
Private Enterprise	Less Than 50	0	0	0	0
	50-100	0	1	2	0
	Over 100	0	1	1	1
	Sub Total	0	2	3	1
	Grand Total	0	4	4	3

GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

TABLE VI

More Difficulty Because of Academic Record with Non-Traditional Grades Such As: Pass/Fail or Credit/No Record

		All Non-Traditional Grades		Half Non-Traditional Grades	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Type and Size					
Government Agency	Less Than 50	1	0	1	0
	50-100	0	0	0	0
	Over 100	2	4	2	4
	Sub Total	3	4	3	4
Private Enterprise	Less Than 50	1	2	1	1
	50-100	2	1	2	1
	Over 100	3	2	3	2
	Sub Total	6	5	6	4
	Grand Total	9	9	9	8

GSU STUDENTS

TABLE I

REACTIONS TO GSU GRADING SYSTEM

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Indifferent	Total
Undergraduate	5	2	2	9
Graduate	7	0	2	9
TOTAL	12	2	4	18

TABLE II

PROBLEMS CAUSED BY GSU TRANSCRIPT

Serious	Solvable	None
2	3	13

28 Students Contacted